

# American Values, Institutions, and Culture

## PolSci 206 Spring 2021

Professor: Michael Hawley  
Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30, Thurs 3:00-4:30 (sign up on Sakai)

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### Course Overview

This course focuses on the political values, institutions, and culture of America from the Founding up to the twenty-first century, with special emphasis on three critical “moments”: 1) the Founding, 2) the Crisis of the House Divided (slavery and the Civil War) and 3) the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of contemporary progressive and conservative visions for America.

### Course Aims:

The primary aims of this class are those that go into determining your grade for the course. Most basically, you will gain an understanding of the questions and problems that have driven the development of American political thought. You will hone your skills at reading difficult texts carefully and evaluating arguments. You will also improve your abilities in constructing your own written arguments, demonstrating your analytical skills, and expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively.

But there is another kind of aim for this course, one that will not be reflected in your grade. Today, America is almost certainly the most powerful nation on earth, and many of us are American citizens. Coming to grips with the idea of America thus has a certain urgency for all of us. American political thought is often centrally concerned with discerning the meaning of America. Is it exceptional, a special case among nations? Or is it the archetypical or model nation? Can it be both? What is the American Experiment? And, is it a success? A failure? Not yet complete? Or even: a fraud? This class gives us the opportunity to begin answering some of these questions.

### Course Books:

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Duke’s textbook partner or online. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions. It truly is important to get the same editions; it helps keep all of us on the same page (literally) as we discuss the readings and when it comes time to write papers. All other texts will be posted on the Sakai site. Sakai readings constitute a major portion of the course’s readings; please make sure you have copies of the reading at hand for the day’s class.

Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Rossiter, with introduction by Charles R. Kesler (Mentor)  
Steven B. Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (Yale)

## Course requirements:

You will be required to write three papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced) on assigned topics. These are not research papers. The only texts you will need to write them will be what we read for this course. I will discuss the expectations and requirements for these papers at greater length in class. Second, there is a participation component to your grade—which is composed both of in-class contributions as well as posts on the discussion forum on Sakai. For the latter, you are required to post 8 reading responses (roughly 150 words each) over the course of the semester. This averages out to roughly one such response for every three class meetings, but you may distribute them however you like throughout the semester. These responses must not exceed 200 words. In them, you should raise a question, pose an objection, or make an argument about some aspect of the next day's reading. You are encouraged also to respond to posts by your fellow students. In order to count, you need to post by midnight of the day before class is to meet—I will read them before class and may incorporate some of them into our discussion.

With all of your work, be sure to follow Duke's standards of conduct regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate dean.

Course grade will be determined as follows:

Three Papers:	60%
Forum Posts	15%
Discussion Contributions	25%

## Reading assignments:

Jan. 21      Introduction

### **The Revolution and the Founding**

Jan. 26      The First Founding:  
- *Democracy in America*, Part 1, ch. 2  
- Mayflower Compact  
- Model of Christian Charity, Winthrop  
- On Liberty, Winthrop  
(all on Sakai)

Jan. 28      Revolution and Independence  
- Letters from Pennsylvania Farmer (selections), Dickinson  
- Letter from Abigail Adams  
- Benjamin Franklin On Virtue

Feb. 2

- Second Treatise on Government* (selections), Locke
- Declaration of Independence  
(All on Sakai)

Feb. 4            The Liberal Republic

- Articles of Confederation (In Kessler)
- Constitution of the United States (In Kessler)
- Spirit of the Laws* (selections), Montesquieu (Sakai)

Feb. 9            The Anti-Federalists

- Selections from “Brutus”, Patrick Henry (Sakai)

Feb. 11           Federalist Defense of the New Founding

- *Federalist Papers* # 1, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23

Feb. 16 **Paper 1 Assigned**

- Letter to Samuel Kercheval, Jefferson (Sakai)
- *Federalist Papers* # 37, 39, 47, 48, 49, 51

Feb. 18

- *Federalist Papers* # 55, 57, 58, 62, 63

Feb. 23

- *Federalist Papers* # 68, 70, 71, 72, 78, 84

Feb. 25

- Hamilton: Report on Manufactures
- Hamilton: Argument for Constitutionality of Bank
- Jefferson: Opinion on Constitutionality of Bank  
(All on Sakai)

Mar. 2

- Pacifcus-Helvidius Debate
- Washington’s Farewell Address
- Letter to Danbury Baptists, Jefferson  
(All on Sakai)

**Mar. 6: First Paper Due**

## **An Outsider's Perspective: Tocqueville on American Life**

Mar. 4

-*Democracy in America* pp. 45-65, 172-180, 187-190, 235-237

Mar. 9 (Day off: University Wellness)

Mar. 16

-*Democracy in America*, pp. 243-249, 278-288, 403-410, 482-484, 489-492, 500-503, 661 665

## **The Crisis of the House Divided**

Mar. 18

-Introduction, xi-xxiii

-Lyceum Speech, Jan. 27, 1838, pp. 7-14

-Temperance Address, Feb. 22, 1842, pp. 14-22

-Eulogy on Henry Clay, July 6, 1852, pp. 43-54

-Address from Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Sept. 30, 1859, pp. 268-278

(All in Lincoln/Smith)

Mar. 23

-Selection from Steven Douglas from Lincoln-Douglas Debate (Sakai)

In Lincoln/Smith:

-Fragments on Slavery, [1854?] p. 58

-Peoria Speech, Oct. 16, 1854, pp. 59-92

-Dred Scott Speech, June 26, 1857, pp. 108-119

Mar. 25 **Paper 2 Assigned**

-Selection from Alexander Stevens, "Cornerstone Speech" (Sakai)

-In Lincoln/Smith:

-House Divided Speech, June 16, 1858, pp. 126-133

-On Slavery and Democracy, p. 150

-Pro-Slavery Theology, [1858?] p. 189

-Letter to H.L. Pierce, and Others, Apr. 6, 1859, pp. 243-244

-Fragment, [1861?] pp. 321-322

-Cooper Institute Speech, Feb. 27, 1860, pp. 283-298

-Speech at New Haven, Mar. 6, 1860, pp. 299-314

Mar. 30

-First Inaugural, Mar. 4, 1861, pp. 324-332

-Meditation on Divine Will, pp. 362-363

-Annual Message, Dec. 1, 1862, beginning at bottom of p. 384 to 392

-Final Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863, pp. 395-396

-Gettysburg Address, Nov. 19, 1863, p. 417

-Letter to Albert Hodges, Apr. 4, 1864, pp. 418-419

-Second Inaugural, Mar. 4, 1865, pp. 428-430

-Speech on Reconstruction, Apr. 11, 1865, pp. 431-434

(All in Lincoln/Smith)

### **Racism and Civil Rights**

Apr. 1 (Note: all readings from here to the end of the semester are on Sakai)

-“Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln”, Douglass

-“What to the Slave is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?”, Douglass

-“What the Black Man Wants”, Douglass

Apr. 6

-“Civil Disobedience”, Thoreau

-“Letter From a Birmingham Jail”, MLK

-“Mountaintop Speech”, MLK

- “The Ballot or the Bullet”, Malcolm X

### **Modern Progressivism and Conservatism**

Apr. 8

-“What is Progress?”, Wilson

-“The Future of Liberalism”, Dewey

-“The Commonwealth Club Address”, FDR

-1941 State of the Union (selection), FDR

-1944 State of the Union (selections), FDR

### **April 11: Second Paper Due**

Apr. 13

-“Port Huron Statement”, SDS

-“The Great Society”, LBJ

-Keynote Address, 2004 DNC”, Obama

-Second Inaugural Address, Obama

**Apr 15 Third Paper Assigned**

-“A Time for Choosing”, Reagan

-Four Heads, One Heart”, James Caesar

Apr. 20

-Selection from *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom

Apr. 22

-Last Day

**April 29: Third Paper Due**